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THE

Commonweal

The Sin of Slums

by John Stanley

Last Chance in Viet Nam

by Howard R. Simpson

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The
Commonweal
week by week

THE PROBLEM

IT is not easy to assay the various factors involved in the tension between the two worlds —partly because of insufficient evidence. In the satellite countries implacable hatred of Soviet Russia is plain enough. But the subject peoples remain virtually helpless. Deep-seated resentment of the Kremlin is also found among the Russian people themselves, who likewise find themselves so under the thumb of the apparatus—with its perfected methods of detection and suppression—as to be powerless.

Despite unceasing official propaganda, the various peoples under the Soviet knout are today more restive than ever. The promises of better food and more household goods of the Malenkov-Beria interval have given way to a new accent on heavy industry and armaments. And along with this shift in propaganda emphasis, promises of certain civil liberties in Russia and apostrophes to peace have dropped out of the picture. Moreover, food shortages are acute.

Further turmoil within the Kremlin itself would appear to offer the greatest hope that this popular unrest will lead to important changes. If, for instance, the Army should finally emerge victorious from a mortal duel with the Communist Party, its knowledge of what war would mean might serve to prompt a less belligerent foreign policy. Mankind might thereby be delivered from the present threat of universal destruction.

This is not an idle, irresponsible or scare-mongering phrase. Mr. Peterson, head of our civil defense, has just issued a statement urging the immediate construction of bomb-proof shelters for every American home; enough food and water, protected from atomic contamination, would have to be provided in each shelter to last for five or six days.

Meanwhile what would be happening within the Soviet Union in the course of such a conflict is indicated by present orders of the United States military high command. In case of a Soviet attack, immediate nuclear retaliation would be virtually automatic regardless of the ensuing state of American communications. The first targets would be Soviet launching bases; then would come industrial centers which support the Russian military machine; after that Soviet cities would move up on the target line.

Fear of such eventualities has served as the required deterrent all through the cold war. At the same time the setting up of a ring of air bases in striking distance of the Soviet heartland does aid the Kremlin in whipping up the fears of the populace. The Soviet leaders brought it all on themselves, but the propinquity of American bombers does serve as a stimulus to their martial attitude. Yet, faced with Soviet imperialism, the United States has had no other choice. The Kremlin seizes upon every conciliatory gesture as a sign of weakness, gullibility or lack of determination to resist.

If, however, the Army were to overthrow the Party, set up some sort of Bonapartist regime, and take real steps to demonstrate a substantial change in policy, the need for such fear-inspiring forward bases might shrink. But how is the world to get to that point from its present state of proclaimed enmity backed by a desperate thermonuclear armaments race?

IT would seem that the general lines of American policy will have to remain fairly constant. We must continue to be firm and vigilant, ever increasing our strength. And in this connection we must do a lot more than hitherto to advance prosperity and political stability throughout the free world. We must be neither yielding nor provocative.

The exchange visits of a few Russian and American editors and farmers may appear of little moment in this titanic struggle. The visitors returning from our shores will hardly undermine the Soviet regime, especially by dint of a brief American visit. The chief importance of such an ex-

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change is in lessening tension between Soviet Russia and the United States.

Europe continues to be the biggest single stake in the cold war, even though Formosa and the Islands embody the most explosive situation. Our China policy continues to stem from a realization that larger stakes lie elsewhere. But the biggest argument for firmness without provocation is that the direction of the changes still developing in the Kremlin greatly depends on the climate of the times; if they can be carried through in an atmosphere of comparative international good feeling and lessened tension, then they may embody some hope. The problem is how the United States and her allies are to induce a change of climate without yielding any more strategic positions or giving way further to the Communists' relentless march.

THE DEMOCRATS' DILEMMA

SIGNS increase that the Democrats approach next year's Presidential election in fear and trembling. The charms of rural life in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, seem their chief—and rapidly diminishing—hope. Certainly Democratic National Chairman Paul M. Butler's recent remark that the President probably would not seek reelection because of "a personal situation in the Eisenhower household" was a clear example of political whistling in the dark. Almost all Republicans (and probably most Democrats) are now agreed that Mr. Eisenhower will be forced to run again in 1956 whatever his personal wishes might be, and as of today chances of beating him seem dismal.

The situation could change, of course, by November 1956, but it is difficult to see how, except at a cost so terrible that no American could wish the change to occur. For, barring some disaster abroad or a serious depression at home, Mr. Eisenhower's popularity seems secure against the slings and arrows of ordinary political fortune. All public opinion polls indicate that with his first term in office more than half completed, the President remains for a majority of the voters a kind of charismatic character: he is seen as remote but likable, retiring but powerful, cautious but dynamic, conservative but liberal, conciliatory but uncompromising, safe but bold; a politician above politics, and hence free from those ordinary failings to which politicians are, in the popular mind, addicted—a leader, a father, and friend.

How does one attack such an image without, in the process, destroying oneself? Clearly, the Democrats do not know, for though few of them share the public's apparent enchantment with the President, fewer still dare attack Mr. Eisenhower's competence and character publicly. Most of them, in fact, feel a need to preface criticisms of the Administration with some assurance that they like Ike too, but . . .

The Democrats' dilemma is consequently painful. They feel confident they have the issues, if they could somehow get the voters to see the issues as they are. But to do this they must break through the benign image that obscures them and they fear that the image is at present unbreakable, that in hitting it they would hurt only themselves. In short, they seem damned if they do and damned if they don't—an awful predicament for politicians to be in as election year draws near. To like Ike or not to like him: that is the Democrats' question.

It seems to us that they must answer it quickly if their nomination of a candidate next year is to have any real meaning. As Arthur Krock observed in a recent *Times* column, the voters demand more than generalized issues; general criticisms must be driven home by specific illustrations. The Democrats cannot hope to win by paying lip-service to the Eisenhower image, arguing that the President is all the wonderful things the voters seem to think he is—but remember that nasty Republican Party.

No, they must be more honest if they are to have any hope of being victorious. If they have a case against the Republicans' conduct of our nation's affairs they must make it against the man ultimately responsible for these affairs. If they have no case, if the Eisenhower image is so authentic that it cannot be honestly attacked, then the Democrats might just as well offer the nation a token candidate next year and save their best men for 1960 when Mr. Eisenhower will really head for that farm in Pennsylvania.

NEXT WEEK

FRANCIS E. MCMAHON writes about Perón's campaign against the Church in Argentina.

"The conflict now raging between Church and State in Argentina surprises no one who is familiar with the program, the character and the objectives of the government of Juan Domingo Perón. From the beginning, the Perón regime had regarded the Church as a potent instrument for the conquest of power. So long as religion served his purposes, Perón did more than tolerate the Church. He favored it. But once those purposes began to be thwarted, he unleashed a wave of anti-clerical fury. . ."

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BRIGHT SPOT

THERE are so many disturbing reports out of Asia, week after week, that good news should not go unnoticed. And the outcome of a recent election in India's state of Andhra was good news.

Andhra is a linguistic state, carved out of famine-ridden Madras. Its politics have frequently been turbulent, and in the elections just held it was feared that the Communists would win a smashing victory. This fear Premier Nehru did little to dissipate. He campaigned against the Communists, but he proceeded so cautiously, perhaps for fear of upsetting his foreign policy, that outside observers despaired. Other members of Mr. Nehru's Congress Party were more forthright, however, and after Nehru's departure they waged a vigorous campaign, explaining Communism as it is really practiced in Russia and China, and denouncing the local Communists as servants of a foreign power. To this vigorous campaign the local voters responded enthusiastically, and when the votes were counted the Communists had received, not the anticipated victory, but a crushing defeat.

The voting in Andhra represented, of course, only one election; it is not Asia. But the expected Communist victory there would have hurt the West all over Asia, and it would have made even more acute India's internal political problems. The fact that the vote went so heavily against the Communists will be noted all over Asia, and native anti-Communist leaders will gain new heart and new support from the fact. All in all, the West can consider the election in Andhra a significant victory.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

UNTIL recently, the Hoover Commission has been almost entirely non-controversial. To a large extent, it seems to have become identified in the public mind with civic virtue—not on quite the same plane as the Boy Scouts or the Easter Seal drive, of course, but representing solid non-partisan civic qualities nonetheless. Part of this attitude probably comes from a kindlier feeling toward the aging Mr. Herbert Hoover, now that the Big Crash is twenty-five years behind us, and part from a widespread conception of the Hoover Commission as a non-partisan office-manager and string-saver for the government. Official operations are traditionally wasteful, in myth always and sometimes in fact, and thus the average taxpayer was predisposed in favor of the Commission, often visualizing its work in terms of economy and economy alone.

This was all pleasant enough, even if it did not show much acquaintance with the basic function of the Hoover Commission. But the peace and quiet are likely to evaporate in the near future. Recently the Commission plunged into a controversial area of public policy by recommending drastic changes in the organization and activities of government agencies which loan money, guarantee loans and write insurance. Involved are such matters as mortgage insurance on homes, loans to small business, loans to farmers for rural electrification and loans to promote export business. If the recommendations are followed, certain activities now carried on by the government would be liquidated or transferred to private financing groups. The changes suggested could produce large annual savings for the government, but these savings would result from making the remaining agencies charge higher interest rates or insurance premiums.

Here the Hoover Commission is on shaky ground. Government responsibility in seeing that credit at reasonable rates is available for projects like rural electrification or home ownership is a central part of the change in government philosophy since Mr. Hoover's day. In its report, the Commission paid tribute to the efficiency of the agencies concerned and insisted that its suggestions would not impair "essential" lending, guaranteeing or insuring functions. But what is essential to one man may certainly be superfluous to another, and Mr. Hoover's view of the role of government in such matters was certainly one reason the voters lost confidence in his Administration during the depression.

In view of the nature of the recommendations, this report by the Hoover Commission should receive very careful scrutiny and considerable public discussion. On issues such as this, it is not always easy to separate proposals for improving efficiency from those which would profoundly alter the basic conception behind the law. But it has to be done. With all due respect to Mr. Hoover, it should not be out of order to suggest that no popular mandate has been given for a return to his conception of the role of government in economic life.

MR. DULLES ON ASIA

THE Secretary of State's recent tour of Asia resulted in two major accomplishments. The Bangkok meeting, which was the occasion for the Dulles trip, put the SEATO pact organization on

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its feet. It is on its feet and headed in the right direction, but its steps are small ones and are unlikely to get much larger. SEATO now is a kind of anti-Communist clearing house in Southeast Asia. Through it, there will be military staff consultations and exchanges of opinion and intelligence. There will be no committed troops and no centralization of military authority. The mutual assistance pact itself will be the only hard guarantee against Chinese aggression; the present headquarters is symbol not reality. Yet symbol is probably the best to be expected in Southeast Asia right now.

The second accomplishment of the Dulles trip was that it permitted him to talk with Sir Anthony Eden about the Formosa problem. The speeches which the two men made after returning to their respective countries were, as has generally been recognized, two sides of one policy. The British Foreign Secretary told Communist China and Nationalist China both to renounce the use of force; he urged the Nationalists to get out of Quemoy and Matsu. Then, he said, when there is a cease-fire and blue water between the two Chinas, it will be possible to look for new political developments—including consideration of Peiping's claim to a UN seat.

While Mr. Eden dangled this carrot before the Communist Chinese nose, Mr. Dulles took a few practice swings with a club to indicate what might happen if China did not go for the carrot. The question of whether we will defend the off-shore islands will be decided by the President, he said, and added that we have "sea and air forces now equipped with new and powerful weapons of precision which can utterly destroy military targets without endangering unrelated civilian centers."

What it comes down to is this: if the Communists will lie quiet for a few months, or publicly renounce the use of force (which is exceedingly unlikely), they might find the Nationalists had, under U.S. persuasion, silently packed their tents and stolen away from the coastal islands. But if they attack the islands they are likely to force this reluctant Administration to fight, and the fight would quite possibly be a nuclear one.

Mr. Dulles went on to remind the mainland Chinese of our system of alliances along their frontier. If they choose general war, they would have to fight it in Korea, Southeast Asia and the Formosa Straits.

But it must be asked whether the Eisenhower Administration really means these threats. Will it use nuclear arms against China and fight a major war on the Asian continent? There is, we suspect, an old fallacy here, the illusion of the "immaculate war." Mr. Dulles speech seemed to imply that if China "decided on general war in Asia," we would only have to drop our nuclear bombs and the South Koreans and Formosa Chinese would do the infantry fighting. The truth is that if major ground action took place, the United States would be deeply involved, as we were in Korea (after initially intending only air intervention). And it is difficult to believe that this Administration would fight on the ground in Asia.

The second objection to the Dulles warning is that its reference to the use of nuclear weapons is deliberately misleading. "Unrelated" is a weasel word.

We do have "small" nuclear weapons and the ability to deliver them with considerable accuracy. But we could not use them on any target on the China Coast, other than military junks at sea, without killing civilians. And if, in the present situation, we kill Chinese civilians with nuclear bombs we can kiss Southeast Asia goodbye. Nuclear weapons should not be used in order to make a firm stand in Asia palatable to the American voter. An "immaculate war" of this kind would serve only to ruin the Western cause in Asia.

SECURITY AGAIN

DURING last year's political campaign the "numbers game" received a new meaning. Claims advanced by Republican politicians—most notably by Vice President Richard Nixon—that the Eisenhower Administration had fired "security risks" by the thousands were attacked by Democratic politicians as a libelous play on words. What, they demanded, was a "security risk"? No clear answer was forthcoming, but the Democrats in the new Congress were determined to find out.

Now they are finding out, and indications are that the label of "numbers game" had a great deal of accuracy. Testifying before a Senate subcommittee, Defense Department counsel Wilbur Brucker said that "a substantial number" of those dismissed in his department had been "probationary employees" dropped for various reasons of "unsuitability" under Civil Service rules and not under the procedures of the Security program. And Scott McLeod testified that "security risk" was necessarily an elusive term. "If we have to have a security risk to get a job done, we're going to [hire him] and get the job done," Mr. McLeod said.

None of this makes the memory of Mr. Nixon's 1954 speeches any less unpleasant than they seemed at the time, and the need to take the security question out of politics is again underlined.

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The Sin of Slums

"THE SLUM IS A GREAT WEIGHT THAT MUST BE CARRIED, AN AFFLICTION LIKE A RUNNING SORE OR A COLLAPSED LUNG"

JOHN STANLEY

GENERALLY speaking, slums are unlighted, unclean, unfragrant, uncapacious, unbeautiful and frightening. They are a social capital sin, producing ills that cripple and pervert human lives. When Father Vincent McNabb was urging men to go back to the land, he called the city a proximate occasion of sin, and counseled men to take their families and settle in rural areas. Father McNabb is now dead, and cities continue to grow in size and density.

The slum is a symbol of injustice and lack of fraternity among men. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Greed keeps slums in being. There are, it is true, "economic forces" at work, but they don't work in a vacuum, unattached to flesh and blood suffering or to avaricious men. Some men make money from the slums. In the process they mutilate their brothers and, of course, themselves.

Concretely, one form this greed takes is trying to get as many human beings as possible to occupy X cubic yards of air enclosed by masonry and set on X square feet of earth, and get them to pay as many dollars as possible for this occupation. Generally speaking, men will not be taken advantage of in this way unless they are helpless to remedy their own situation. So in order for a slum to exist there must be a large number of relatively helpless people available. Slums exist all over the country, of course, but in New York slums traditionally involve people who have just arrived in large numbers from outside the city, from Europe, from the South and now, of course, from Puerto Rico. Frequently they lack a marketable trade and are illiterate, either absolutely or in the English language. They arrive in an impoverished condition from an impoverished area, attracted to New York because of its wealth and opportunity, well advertised and dramatized. They can easily be taken advantage of because they have no resources.

NEW York is probably the epitome of the "city" today for most people. It is the biggest in the world; UN headquarters; Radio City; theater; most spectacular waterfront, and so forth. And too many of its people live in some of the grimmest physical and spiritual conditions imaginable. A few live in shining towers surrounded by sun and music and warmth. Too many exist in rooms entirely lacking in clean air and sunlight, and to describe them in such words as "squalid" or "dreary" or "wretched" is pedestrian understatement. Their burdens are cruel.

Consider, for example, a woman I met a couple of years ago. She had four children under the age of ten, and she lived in a fifth floor walk-up on Elizabeth Street in lower Manhattan Island, an area predominantly Italian-American. The streets are dark and narrow and choked with cars and trucks. There are in the neighborhood not only tenement houses, but small factories and warehouses and machine shops. The pavements are broken and uneven; the walks are always littered, and the gutters are never clear of garbage and refuse.

This woman's apartment consisted of four small rooms, with a toilet in the hall which is shared by other families. Her apartment is five flights up; every time the children are to go outside she has to take them down five dark flights of iron stairs, then remain with them on the sidewalk while they play so that they won't run out into the traffic. Before she goes back upstairs she does the marketing, taking the children with her. That done, she goes back up to the four small rooms. Once in the morning and once in the afternoon she climbs the five flights, even while she is pregnant, and when she shops she has to carry up provisions for six people. There is no central heating, of course, so coal must be hauled up by the hundred-weight—at much greater expense than having it delivered by the ton into a basement bin.

Even at that, this sketch does not represent the worst of all possible situations. This woman has a husband who earns "good money" in a nearby factory. There are always food and shoes. She does not have to go out to work. She is a superior person and in good health; she can be strenuous in her care for her children. She is the heroic type, and her story is a sort

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of idyl. When one has recounted it one has recounted the best possible. A story like hers is the bright side of the medal.

On the darker side consider an old house near Cooper Union—a handsome old house, in point of fact. It is decayed now, and probably marked for demolition, but it has better lines than those great brick fortresses over on First Avenue below Bellevue that form a "project." This old house is a rooming-house now, and a scowling mulatto in sun-tans lets you in and directs you up a short, quite wide flight of stairs. You make your way past a derelict in a semi-comatose condition with the fly of his pants open and sores and slobber and dirt all over his face. A fat little blonde girl is sitting on the landing and some old men and women in greasy-looking clothes stare at you from a doorway. You can see the lathing through the gaps in the plaster walls, and it has been a long while since the floor was swept. A gray cat looks at you with a kitten in her mouth. You ask, and an old woman, very thin and wrinkled, points down an almost entirely darkened hallway. You make for a dimly lighted doorway at the end of the hall and find yourself looking at the artifacts of someone's family life.

Two double beds, pushed together, sagging in the middle and covered with brown army blankets dominate the room. There is a shredded shade at the window which looks out at a brick wall. What appears to be about a forty-watt bulb hangs by a cord from the ceiling, and the color of the walls is beyond recall. Lengths of cord have been strung across the room in several directions for drying clothes. A large dresser, a cardboard closet and a three-burner gas-stove have been wedged in somehow. A boy of perhaps thirteen or fourteen years sits on the bed completely idle, a melancholy sag to his shoulders. He is thin and dark with heavy, well-shaped lips and curly hair. You ask him and he answers with a Spanish accent that you must knock on the door opposite. There you find a woman, heavy, in her fifties, with gray hair falling around her shoulders, and wearing a cotton wrapper and felt slippers. You state your business and an angry voice answers, "No, no, come back after." You ask her a question; she does not understand, and she calls to the boy to translate. At the end of a short, three-way conversation it comes out that you've got to return at five and see the agent, and that a room in this place costs sixteen dollars a week.

THIS is a slum dwelling. A whole family exists in that room, eating, sleeping, talking, punishing, loving, everything. This has all been told before, yet people do not seem to believe it, feel it. This family is not the only one living this way. All over the city the same thing is going on. Harlem, of course, is a byword. It is like a fire in a forest, burning here with a lot of smoke and flame, then sometimes leaping over to another area, or occasionally creeping underground almost unseen, except that the ground is hot; holocausts everywhere, leaving only the smoke and ashes of vanished hopes and brutality and the denial in action of all credos.

A slum area is an area in which things are out of order. There is an absence of what there should be for the proper development of the human person. Each person needs a certain minimum of air and space and sunlight. At different ages requirements for these things vary. An infant of one month needs little space. At five he needs more space. At eight still more. Between ten and sixteen he needs tremendous amounts of it. Not long after that the amounts required begin to decrease. At sixty he has to have not very much. But go up to streets people look down on from Morningside Heights, or walk around Mulberry Street or Mott or over in the Village, say along Perry Street, and you see how acute is the space shortage.

Boys have the hardest time of it. They may be able to play a little stick-ball, stopping every two minutes to let a car pass. During the summer they play cards by the hour, boys of eight, ten, twelve years old. They toss pennies and get chased by angry-voiced tradesmen. They smoke cigarettes in the door-ways, and just hang around. They have enormous energies, and lack the intellectual and spiritual development to profit from the terrible asceticism imposed on them. So things happen. There is no need to recount the daily contents of the police records and the tabloids. But not only these obvious things happen, but deeper things, quieter things; time-bombs are ignited that explode ten or twenty years later.

Nor is it an answer to say these things also happen in leafy Westchester or sunny Long Island. It is no solution to confuse the problem of the former with the problem of the latter; the one is not the answer to the other.

A slum is not just a railroad flat on Second Avenue. I know one railroad flat uptown between First and Second Avenue that is luxurious, and there must be

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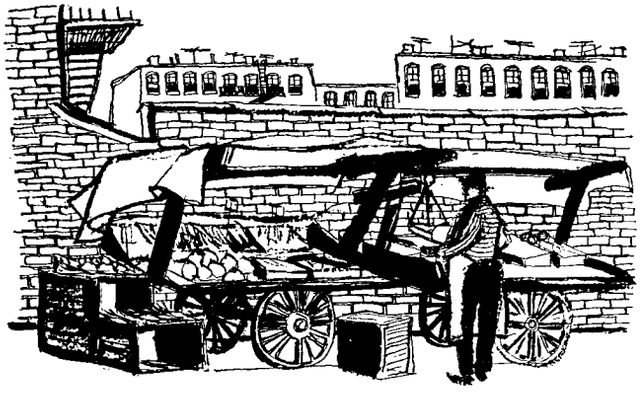
more. After you climb two flights of stairs that warn you to expect wretchedness, you step into room laid with Chinese silk rugs and hung with antique velvet and brocade. There are shiny automatic things in the kitchen, and every year the family take the *Ile de France* and spend the summer at their place in Brittany. For them living where they do is not slum-living. But as you go out the little girls on the stoop of crumbling brownstone are pale from lack of sun and air, and too much penny-candy. It is hard to state the problem neatly and find easy solutions.

Every once in a while in Greenwich Village people start talking about building a new playground. Then there is a great outcry from other people about the sacrilege of tearing down some "fine old place," and *The Villager* announces meetings and writes editorials about the proposed infamy. Usually it is pointed out that in this particular "mews" or "court" some writer wrote the final lines to some deathless prose or other. And so the children continue to dart in and out in front of transcontinental trailer trucks and read endless comic books indoors. All of which is not to suggest that the provision of one more concrete playground would be achieving the millenium.

Nor is the millenium reached by building a platoon of sixteen-story cliffs; if you marched them up and down the five boroughs it would not then make this the best of all possible cities. Some of the very old houses, three stories high and with a back yard that takes up half the property, are perfectly satisfactory urban dwellings—if they are occupied by a single family, with a couple of roomers taken in, possibly, as was the original intention for these places. After all, not everyone can, or would want to, live on acreage. But most of the people in the area do not live in such buildings; most live in six- or seven-story



walk-ups built fifty years ago for profit. And these buildings occupy almost all the land. This is not to mention the twenty-story places, complete with doormen, which occupy all the land and vast cubic yardages of sun and air. These were hardly conceived as places in which the family unit could best fulfill its function of nurturing the individual person physically and spiritually; they are simply investment opportunities.

So in such neighborhoods everyone within miles around must pay tribute to history and ignorance and the profit motive, and they pay in coinage of sun and air and space and quiet and beauty. This last is important. Every day countless persons must be afflicted aesthetically, spiritually, by ugliness, and so we beget people with coarsened sensibilities, people made sad by they know not what.

THE slum is a great weight that must be carried about on the back of the individual and the community; it is an affliction like a broken hip or a runing sore or a collapsed lung. For those who live in the suburbs outside, slums are atmosphere that surrounds a funny little spaghetti joint that you went to years ago with somebody's classmate, and afterwards you went to Sammy's Bowery Follies and drank beer and some bum. . . . But for the native the slum is a place where dreams turn into nightmares and mothers put their babies into wire cages to protect them from the rats. A place where you wage a constant war against bedbugs—cockroaches you accept. This is, of course, New York City, U.S.A., 1955.

The slum is the place where fertile young wives of virile young men restrict their families to one or two children and stay away from the Sacraments for years because they are doing something they cannot get absolution for; or if there is sufficient social pressure they may approach the Communion rail anyhow, rationalizing that it isn't wrong. They are products of the same bleak tenements, with many brothers and sisters, and they are not going to go through what their mothers went through, nor force their offspring to go through what they went through.

The continuation of the slum is contingent on the strength of a variety of vested interests. For example, the merchants who have their shops in the area may be absolutely dependent for survival on the continuation of the existing situation. They would be ruined by any radical change. In some instances, the area has been marked for clearance for years, but opposition is too strong to bring it about. And the inhabitants have a vested interest in the very real community that flourishes there; they don't want to be set adrift. And often there are parishes which have built churches and schools and convents at enormous expense and sacrifice. The problem is too complex to admit easy solutions and too urgent to be kept from solution.

It is the easiest thing in the world to hire housewreckers and bulldozers, but it is less easy to decide what is to be put in the place of what has been pulled down. It would be folly indeed to rid the house of a devil, to sweep it clean, only to admit seven more

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devils more terrible than the first to take his place. Why are they building now the way they are building? To enable people to fulfill their capacities of body and spirit and to help each other carry burdens, or to achieve a maximum density of population and insure a ready labor market?

What effect will a generation of living in a highly regulated "project" have on an inhabitant? You live in three rooms frequently inspected, get up to an alarm-clock radio, go down to the street fifteen stories by elevator, push onto the subway, punch a clock, punch it again going out to lunch and coming back and leaving for home, jump on the subway, up in the elevator, defrost three "TV meals," turn the radio down at eleven, and so to bed. Maybe it's good. It's different. Maybe it will develop the virtue of docility; that's a good virtue. But it all has to be thought about —still. This has all been said before, of course. But it must be emphasized that angelism is not admissible; we are not disembodied spirits. Matter helps form the man; matter is important and powerful. Men build houses and houses build men.

IT has been a generation now since Virginia Woolf spoke of the necessity of a room with a latch-key and five hundred pounds a year. She was principally interested in women and why they hadn't produced the art men had, and she was concerned with the material reasons for this. But every man needs five hundred a year and a room, not to write fiction, but to build a life. And he shouldn't have to make getting to some green fields or white fields and clean air a day's excursion.

This society, this system, imposes on a man an asceticism he is spiritually unprepared for; to be fruitful, supererogatory penances must be freely chosen. Poverty is holy only when it is freely chosen. Maybe you have to be rich before you can be poor; St. Francis was, and St. Bernard, and St. Benedict, and St. Therese and St. Teresa. And not as many works of art and literature and music come out of frozen garrets as the romantics who call themselves rugged individualists would have us believe.

The deprivations and sufferings in the slums of cities like New York are unnecessary and wasteful of human energy. There was a lot of talk about these things in the thirties when people were going to see "Dead End," and it is true that a lot of those terrible places have since been torn down. But a lot of other bad places have grown up in the meantime.

We spend quantities of our treasure and time and energy on H-bombs and aircraft carriers. But you cannot blame the slums on war; they are not father and son, they are two hideous fellow-travelers. Many slum dwellings came into being during the prosperity that followed the war. Slums continue to exist as concretized, incarnated greed, sloth, ignorance. Here is the core of the problem. If we could face this, the rest would be comparatively easy.

PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM

Last Hope in Viet Nam

HOWARD R. SIMPSON

Saigon

AT twelve midnight on January 15th the sing-song voices of the Chinese girls behind the busy dice tables faded. At six a.m. on January 16th the small wooden balls ceased to click around the brightly painted roulette wheels. The "Grande Monde" gambling hall, the largest and most profitable in Saigon, had taken in its last piastre. The bleary-eyed, early morning gamblers filed out of the entrance and the rusty iron gates were closed. As the lock was snapped shut a policeman pulled a wicker chair to the gate and sat down. Outside, Saigon's early morning traffic began to stir.

It was a simple shutdown with no difficulties and no fanfare but to Saigon observers it was an event of significance. For the first time the National Government of Viet Nam had stood up to General Le Van Vien, the boss of Saigon's "shock police" and chief of the "Binh Xuyen," a quasi-military organization that has held undisputed control of Saigon's gambling halls and houses of prostitution. This one event was also significant as it served to underline the slow emergence of President Ngo Dinh Diem of Viet Nam and his government as a positive political force.

Mr. Simpson is a press officer with the U. S. Information Agency in Indochina.

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The metamorphosis has been slow, at times painfully so, but the quiet, determined little man hard at work in "Freedom Palace" has come through more crises in the last few months than most Victorian ministers coped with in their lifetime; and he has done so without notable compromise.

From the start, however, it has been rough sledding. The President's first press conference during the army-government troubles was a strain both on the President and the correspondents. The correspondents had attended a morning press conference at the villa of voluble, publicity-minded Chief of Staff General Nguyen Van Hinh. Late the same evening they were summoned to the Presidential Palace where they were met by a visibly tired and shaken President who answered their questions in monosyllables and seemed, outwardly, to have accepted his fate. Many correspondents left that night with the obituary of the Ngo Dinh Diem government in their minds.

Since the dark days when General Hinh's armored cars openly flaunted the government's authority and the army radio continually attacked the President, there has been a slow change in Ngo Dinh Diem. The successful settlement of the army dispute; the continued, uninterrupted evacuation of non-Communist Vietnamese from the North, and the first successful public appearance trip to the provinces have all helped to build the President's confidence.

ONE of the constant problems in Free Viet Nam is the political and military position of the sects. There are three main sects in South Viet Nam: the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen. Each has its own private army and the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao are presently represented in the Nationalist cabinet.

The Cao Dai is a religio-military sect with a "Vatican" of its own at Tay Ninh, about five hours by road from Saigon. The Cao Dai has its own "Pope" who resides near a gingerbread cathedral upon whose altar sits a round blue globe with the "All Seeing Eye," the Cao Dai symbol, staring out upon the faithful. Their religion incorporates bits and snatches of Catholicism, Buddhism, Taoism, and ancient Vietnamese ancestor worship. Checking the list of Cao Dai patron saints one sees the names of Sun Yat-sen and Victor Hugo. Winston Churchill has been nominated but only death can bring the final vote. In addition to a strange and colorful religion the Cao Dai also has an army of its own and it wields a fairly heavy political stick in South Viet Nam.

The Hoa Hao is another religio-military group. They call themselves "Reformed Buddhists" and they too maintain a private army in sections of South Viet Nam.

The Binh Xuyen with their shock police, the latter in reality a private army, do not link their organization with a specific religion but their political maneuvering and behind-the-scenes presence in Saigon makes them a force in national affairs.

The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao each have their dissident groups and it is from these dissident commanders of both sects that President Ngo Dinh Diem has recently received promises of collaboration and support.

The sects have always watched changes in the political wind. During the army-government troubles they sat pretty much on the sidelines. More recently, their struggle with the government has produced some open military action.

In order to judge public feeling and make contact with the Vietnamese people the President has been on a number of provincial trips. He has been in zones recently evacuated by the Communists and has inspected his nation's defenses along the line of demarcation in central Viet Nam. From these trips the President has absorbed a little of the crowds' enthusiasm and he also has made an impression on Vietnamese government officials who have never worried about a president's visit in their area before.

The President now has a little more time to look back and evaluate the happenings of the last few months. Speaking of his first days in the Presidency, he says, "there was a certain cynical, negative attitude of some Vietnamese when the government first began to work but I feel that the people who work and realize the value of their labor are the ones that recognized the Viet Minh threat and supported the government. All the people ask is that the cause is just and that their leaders be leaders."

Speaking of the Vietnamese that are still working with the Viet Minh Communists and in particular the misled nationalists, the President says, "I have given orders that we should receive these men should they come over to our side; but the Communists watch them closely and guard them well. We are ready to receive them if they come."

One of the President's larger problems is the Vietnamese love for gambling. Between the planting of the rice crop and its harvest there is a considerable time gap. During this period the villagers often kill time by gambling. Though it is usually for small stakes the

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gambling often leads to unpayable debts, bad feeling, and in some cases violence. The new government proposes a program of public works under which the "arms of the people" would be used to build new highways, irrigation systems, and carry out refugee and social projects. The people would be paid for their participation in this work and according to the President's plan all would benefit from the results.

At the same time, the President plans to push his anti-corruption campaign. Already prominent government officials have been hit. Faces that one remembers seeing regularly at palace cocktail parties under other regimes have appeared on Saigon front pages alongside a list of charges. The closing of the "Grande Monde" is a result of this program. The government is now studying the problem of prostitution, a major headache brought on by eight years of war. Provincial chiefs who once felt fairly secure in their almost feudal residences are now taking a second look at Ngo Dinh Diem.

Lately there have been some enemies of the President attempting to attack him on what they evidently consider his Achilles heel; that is, his well-publicized Catholicism. Rumors of Catholic political domination have been spread in the hope of turning Buddhist and other religious groups against the government. Answering these critics as a Catholic, Diem says, "We make no politics. We are not a political party and we have no ambition to introduce our religion or force it upon anyone." The President has held long meetings with yellow-robed Buddhist monks. He recently visited the "Holy See" of the Cao Dai and lunched with the "Pope," and he and his government have worked closely with other religious groups in the reception and resettlement of refugees.

The governments of the free world have assisted the National Government of Viet Nam in many ways. American, British and French assistance has brought the government through some difficult days. The assistance of the Philippines with their "Operation Brotherhood" (at this writing eighteen Philippine doctors, nurses, and social workers are arriving to assist in reoccupation of areas previously held by the Communists) and numerous private organizations, both in Asia and the West, have helped to preserve Free Viet Nam.

There are many grave problems and pitfalls ahead in Viet Nam. The chances of holding the South have been evaluated as about even. The Viet Minh, still carrying the banner of anti-colonialism and led by a man still popular in the South as well as the North, are hard at work politically as well as militarily. The odds have changed for the better in the last few months and if they continue to change the surprisingly honest, sincere little man in the Palace will have proved his point. "All the people ask is that the cause is just and that their leaders be leaders."

THE MERGER

Labor's House United

THE story is that Walter Reuther did not want to go to Miami Beach. All his life he had been avoiding the place. To him the idea of labor leaders' meeting in a Florida resort was as incongruous and unseemly as a convention of bishops in a night-club.

To the members of the executive council of the AFL such an attitude was "juvenile." They had been holding their winter meetings there for years and had always found the place most congenial. What was wrong with a little basking on the beach between sessions? What was wrong with a little trip to the track in the afternoon to lay a little bet? These were innocent, healthful recreations that got a man out into the sun and the open air. The rank-and-file, freezing up North, would be glad to know that their leaders, who had worked so hard all their lives, were at last able to enjoy themselves.

Well, Reuther went. It didn't seem likely that he could find common ground with the baskers and the bettors. The cynics, the ones with the shrewd eyes and the confident voices, were all saying that this one would break up just like the others, with nothing agreed to and the CIO finding some insurmountable obstacle that made unity once more impossible.

The cynics were wrong. Within two days Reuther and his CIO committee had as good an agreement as anyone could expect and American labor stood united for the first time in almost twenty years.

This is good news. The reactionaries will of course be sweating in their sleep. Those who think labor is too strong already will not like it. But I think the friends of the poor should be glad. For the poor are much stronger and more hopeful today than they were yesterday.

Mike Quill is accusing Reuther of a "sell-out." This is a stupid accusation, typical of Quill, who will say almost anything to get a headline. The truth is that if Reuther had had his way, there might not have been any unity agreement in Miami Beach, precisely because Reuther wanted to put up a more vigorous fight for specific guarantees on raiding, racketeering and racial discrimination. These were the points on which Quill accused him of betrayal.

A few weeks before the meeting in Miami Beach, Reuther hammered at the necessity of a strong no-

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raiding guarantee in a session with CIO vice-presidents. He was practically alone in taking this position. Opposing him were spokesmen for such major CIO unions as Steel, Rubber, Textile, Communications, and Clothing Workers, all of whom felt that the CIO should not insist on a rigid no-raiding bar as a condition of merger, especially since the AFL itself has not been able to force such a condition upon its own members. As a matter of fact, I believe this position was the wiser one.

The merger agreement says this: "It is recognized as a fundamental basis for the merger of the AFL and CIO that each national and international union, federal labor union, local industrial union, and organizing committee, . . . shall retain its charter or certificate and become, by virtue of the merger, an affiliate of the merged federation. [All mergers of individual unions will be strictly voluntary, which may not be neat, but is certainly wise—J.C.C.]

"It is further recognized and agreed that the integrity of each affiliated union in the merged federation shall be maintained and preserved. In order to effectuate this principle the constitution of the merged federation shall contain a constitutional declaration for respect by each affiliate of the established bargaining relationship of every other affiliate and against raiding by any affiliate of the established collective bargaining relationship of any other affiliate. The merged federation shall provide appropriate machinery to implement this constitutional declaration."

"APPROPRIATE machinery"—there's the rub. Dave Beck, powerful boss of the powerful Teamsters, has already notified all and sundry that he will be bound by no anti-raiding machinery. He covets "50,000 workers" he says rightfully belong to his union but are now enrolled in other AFL and CIO unions. (He overlooks 100,000 or more workers who rightfully belong to other unions but are presently enrolled in the Teamsters.)

The question, of course, is whether the "appropriate machinery" will be appropriate enough to throw the Teamsters out of the merged federation. And the answer seems to be "No." The Teamsters have 1,300,000 members and the power to make or break strikes simply by honoring or refusing to honor a picket line. It is not likely that anyone is going to consign such a power to exterior darkness.

So, just for safety's sake, the agreement provides that the no-raiding agreements (signed by 77 of 111 AFL unions and 30 of 34 CIO unions) will be extended for two years.

The new constitution will have similar declarations of principle outlawing racketeering, racial discrimination, and Communist penetration, and again "appropriate machinery" will be devised to enforce the bans.

Power will rest in the merged federation, as it has in AFL and CIO, to expel unions who violate the constitution. That should be enough. With the CIO unions inside, those elements in the AFL who want to run a decent labor movement will be strengthened to the point where they can keep any hoodlum or anti-social elements in line—including Dave Beck, I think.

But a no-raiding pact is not the end-all and be-all of life. In fact, if a united labor movement has a danger it is that it will perpetuate in power unions that do not deserve to be perpetuated.

George Meany, president of the AFL, will be president of the new federation. That was expected, and that is okay because Meany is a solid labor leader. The secretary-treasurer, initially, will come from the AFL and will probably be the AFL incumbent, William Schnitzler. The director of organization will be a CIO man, which may be important in determining whether the industrial union form of organization will be favored when the new federation tackles unorganized industries.

There will be an executive committee which will constitute the inner ring of brass, consisting of three CIO men, three AFL, and the two top officers. The executive council will have 17 AFL vice-presidents and ten CIO. There will also be an executive board representing all 145 unions in the merged federation which will meet once a year. The conventions of the federation itself will be every two years, a new departure.

WHY did it happen after all these years? If there was any one man responsible I would say it was David McDonald, president of the CIO Steelworkers. For what were probably not the best motives in the world McDonald was threatening to pull out of the CIO if unity was not consummated this year. The practical good sense of AFL President George Meany also helped.

And there was a general conviction on the part of many CIO leaders that the hostile political climate in America made any kind of division in labor's ranks a luxury the movement could not afford. The rising tide of so-called "right-to-work" or open-shop laws in the states (now seventeen) was one symptom of this hostility. What will be the effects? Labor will be stronger on the economic front, stronger on the political front, stronger every which way. If you think the American worker can use more economic strength and more effective representation in politics, then you should like it. If not, not. I say, "Thank God!"

JOHN C. CORT.

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The Strange Alliance

THREE times during this past week I had the opportunity to talk at some length with ex-Communists. For each of the three, leaving the Party was a bitter ordeal and entailed a great deal of personal suffering. One does not leave the Communist Party, after years of close comradeship and stern indoctrination, the same kind of person who went into the Party. To have been a Communist, deep in the movement, means that one's friends were Communists, that one has studiously insulated himself against unpleasant facts about the Soviet Union and has been conditioned to believe the worst about the United States.

It means that one has been taught —and probably has come to believe—that he and his comrades alone hold history by the tail, that he is surrounded by many enemies but few friends and that the sinister forces opposing him, whatever their immediate successes, are doomed.

Ultimately one is propelled toward the Party by a spirit of revolt against what is genuinely wrong with the status quo. The Party appeals to idealism and highmindedness. One finds himself among people who share his own anger at all the things that are wrong in the social order. Then the conditioning begins.

A novice is taught that social evil is not isolated phenomena. It arises from resistance to the inevitable revolution that will sweep such evil into the ashcan of bourgeois history. One is given certain abstract values—the true brotherhood of man, for instance, or the triumph of peace over war. In time these abstract values take on flesh and blood. They become incarnate. They become the Soviet Union. Soon one no longer talks about abstract values and tenuous ideals; one learns to think rather of the Soviet Union, where all these values and ideals actually exist. One begins to believe that the fate of the ideals which brought him into the Party in the first place is inextricably bound up with the fate of the Soviet Union. One begins to accept the party line.

If the party line dictates an alliance with America First one day and all-out support of the Roosevelt foreign policy the next, this is the way it must be. If the party line dictates support of a no-strike pledge, he who strikes is a monster. If the party line dictates that good comrades support the Smith Act against a group of Trotskyites, then the Smith Act is a piece of inspired legislation. There is an inner consistency which is truly understood only by those who know that there are no longer many ideals but the one Ideal—the Soviet Union—which has absorbed them all. One is faithful to his ideals by being faithful to the incarnation of all ideals.

Old values take on new definitions. The Truth is the Revolution, and he is a truthful man, regardless of how many bourgeois lies he tells, who serves that Truth. Man is the triumphant classless class, and individual men who stand in the way of History have no rights. They are not Man. Freedom is cooperation with the inevitable triumph of the Revolution, and he is free who cooperates with necessity, though his obedience be deemed slavery by the bourgeois world with its mistaken notion of freedom. One learns how to cooperate with necessity.

Again this takes time and conditioning. But when one has learned, he knows how to act like a Communist. Then if the party line dictates that he say he is not a Communist, this is no lie; it is the truth because it serves the ultimate Truth. If the party line dictates that he stand by and approve of millions' being enslaved, obedience is then a tribute to Freedom, for he is free who cooperates with necessity. If one learns to approve of lies and wanton violence and the use of shifting means, one has been liberated from the bourgeois shackles for the ultimate Freedom.

Some people, by the grace of God, come out of the shadows, like the three I talked with this week. It is difficult. It means an emotional shock generally, and a spiritual ordeal. The ordeal is painful to the extent that one was a committed person. An ex-Communist has to be born again.

When men come out of this darkness into the sunlight, it often happens that the world of healthy liberals will not believe—or do not seem to believe—the sheer ugliness of their experience in the Party. The ex-Communists often are driven by necessity to find sympathy and understanding among those in the far-right wing who do believe the worst. And the worst is true. The liberals, they think, turn deaf ears to their warnings about the evil they have known from within the Party. Then the liberals go on to condemn them bitterly because they have found friendly refuge among the know-nothings. The liberals, in some cases, seem intent on driving them away from the camp which vigorously sponsors the ideals that led them into the Party in the first place.

In a word, the liberals become their enemies, and the rightists become their friends. Then they either become unhappy, guilt-ridden people who believe in the ideals to which the liberals are dedicated but feel that only the rightists understand Communism, in which case they make an uneasy alliance with the rightists, or they abandon their youthful pre-Communist ideals entirely and adopt the negations of their new friends.

The final battle for the world, one of them said, will be a struggle between Communists and ex-Communists. In that battle the rightists, who are at least receptive to the idea of the total evil found in Communism, will make fine soldiers in the ranks. But this is a battle where there is no place for innocence or the innocent, called dupes. One makes the allies he can get. In a crisis one accepts the hands of friendship that are offered.

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE STAGE

TWO STRIKES AND A FOUL

THE season proliferates occasions of terror: at the Barrymore, Joseph Hayes turns the screw again with a racy transcript of his novel, "The Desperate Hours." The genteel sadism of Mr. Hayes' situation—a middlewest, middle-class family held at bay by a trio of escaped convicts—is remorselessly exploited, its clammy solipsistic pressure tightened intolerably. Yet my furtive gasps and grimaces and shudders withal, I must note that "The Desperate Hours" does not provide the kind of experience which interests me in the theater. It is true to life, but hardly to living; its human gestures are withered and abortive and touchingly primitive. What is worse, the interstices of its melodramatic structure (very filmic, this—"what a movie it will make!" we say, tritely) are clogged with a pious democratic rhetoric which my colleague on the *New Republic,* Mr. Eric Bentley, has succinctly characterized as junk. The judgment is one to which I shall not take exception. Intermittently I was moved —by Paul Newman's flashing jets of neurotic bravado, by the probity and embattled decencies of Karl Malden—but not to the point of implicating myself.

THERE is, in literature as in cuisine, a kind of national *kitsch,* a mode in which the specific *serious* bad taste of a time and place most easily issues: here, in drama, it would be the play of saloon profundities ("Here Come the Clowns" entire, "The Time of Your Life" *passim*); in London, the well-made study of a small ethical ambiguity, faultlessly rehearsed in tones of the finest breeding (Galsworthy, or what-you-will). Paris, too, submits a candidate: the parable of fatality, uncertainly tacked to myth—the leavings of Cocteau, as it were, garnished for the boulevards. M. Jacques Deval's "Tonight in Samarkand" (*Closed at the Morosco*) is a case in point: a specimen not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Most artfully, M. Deval evokes the particolored texture of carnival reality; less securely does he bind his figures to the malign shapes of destiny. And who should arrive with the first curtain but *la belle dame sans merci*—the pale blonde of Montparnasse—Death herself, in a soiled trench coat, with a slash of color at the throat. Out of that haunting theme—the midnight appointment in Samarra—Mr. John O'Hara made his mordant fiction; luckier in his performance, M. Deval might too have accomplished another reading. What is indicated is dash and romantic languor, ennui of will, the cool, light shudder of doom: what the play gets is efficiency and conventional magic. Louis Jourdan's performance is full of a supple and interesting charm; Jan Farrand, however—and whatever her certain graces—lacks the continental sensibility, the intimate face of European *knowing,* which would have given her role the trapped and resonant pathos of a larger grandeur.

MR. Paul Vincent Carroll's "The Wayward Saint" has recently died at the hands of assassins (known), and has, no doubt, taken wing to that limbo of plays which patiently await the redemption of an ideal production. Mr. Carroll's lyrical scenes from provincial life flourish in that rich and loamy earth of the unregenerate natural which has nourished the finest Irish drama; what withered them here was the gaseous DDT of Broadway, shriveling their bloom, smothering their delicate strength under a layer of pushing and featureless banality. Admittedly, a vein of adolescent fantasy alloys the piece, but still, surely no person of taste would have permitted a play to be so wrenched out of the context of its tone and temper as did Mr. Carroll's producers. Everywhere there was uncertainty and division—in the direction, in lesser roles—everywhere but at the center where, in Liam Redmond's playing, a wondrous power held. I would call Mr. Redmond's portrait of the abused and slyly resilient Canon McCooey a beautifully observed study of Irish clerical life, were it not for the intense spontaneity which governed all its details, the marvelous ease with which the actor documented both the eccentric surface of manners and the informing spiritual reality. It was a performance, indeed a play, to remind us again—in its integrity of feeling and spirit—of the freedom which (at a certain level) Irish life and art still enjoy from that "dissociation of sensibility" which has so subtly corrupted the quality of contemporary experience. (*Closed at the Cort.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

"THE DROGHTE OF MARCH"

SPRING is arriving with a flurry of new films, none of which you have to drop everything to rush out and see, but several of which you may want to know about pro and con.

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"Captain Lightfoot" is a mildly entertaining adventure-and-romance item about Irish rebels in 1815. Its chief claim to fame is some lovely Irish scenery filmed in Technicolor and CinemaScope. Its plot, one of those vague affairs about a secret society of Irishmen seething under the English yoke, builds up slowly and not too interestingly to a climax that really is quite thrilling; but by that time one is a little tired of watching reckless and over-anxious Rock Hudson stumble in and out of the clutches of the villainous English. As Captain Thunderbolt, Ireland's greatest rebel and father of Rock's beloved (Barbara Rush), Jeff Morrow steals most of the thunder. The supporting cast are properly decorative and pugnacious: Denis O'Dea, Kathleen Ryan, Finlay Currie. I suspect, however, that this colorful picture will appeal mainly to Eirephiles.

TAKING place some thirty years later and starting in Ireland is "Untamed," the title of which refers to its heroine, played by Susan Hayward with determined vigor, and to South Africa, the locale of most of the tempestuous action. Willful Susan goes to this grim, wild country with her husband (John Justin) mainly to be close to a Dutchman of whom she is enamored. Curiously enough, Tyrone Power plays this role of a man with big ideas (to build a Dutch Free State) in a wooden fashion. And his heart does not belong to Susan whose husband is conveniently killed off by the Zulus. After a tepid love affair, he deserts her on the farm they've started and rushes off to lead a Commando, an organization determined to make this territory safe for homesteaders. This gives Richard Egan, who, next to the warlike Zulus, plays the liveliest and meanest role in the picture, a chance to make up to Miss Hayward who is still untamed although she now has two children and a farm to manage. She gets some, but not much, help from Agnes Moorehead who spends most of her time looking contemptuous at Susan's behavior and at the hard life in the new land of South Africa.

It is not so much the fault of the good actors or of Director Henry King (although he should have known his cast was not coming through) that "Untamed" is such a ridiculous movie. The six writers involved (including Helga Moray who wrote the original) were more or less intent on making a sort of South African "Gone with the Wind," but the trite and complicated result has none of the quality of "GWTW." What "Untamed" does have is outstanding footage in De Luxe Color and CinemaScope of South Africa and the Zulus. If you don't mind an unsavory story, you might find these worth the trip and the tripe.

AFTER seeing several new gangster films, I am wondering if we are in for a return cycle of this type of movie. Two of these new items are exceptionally well-made from the cinematic point of view, but dish up an awful lot of violence and sensational low-life before they finally get around to the crime-does-not-pay finale. "New York Confidential," with its coldly analytical survey of how a big-time crime-and-corruption syndicate works, is as fascinating to watch as a snake slithering over a rock. Broderick Crawford as the syndicate head, Anne Bancroft as his disturbed and unhappy daughter, Richard Conte as a killer brought to town to do a job, portray their anti-social roles well and convey quite effectively the idea that evil destroys itself. I wish, however, that a film like this that dwells so emphatically on the rules of organized crime and loyalty to the code would investigate how its members went so far astray in the first place and what they and their families expect to get out of their way of life—other than sudden death.

SUDDEN death in the electric chair is what the racketeer played by Edward G. Robinson in "Black Tuesday" hopes to escape from. He and another condemned man (Peter Graves) do manage to escape on electrocution day with the help of a gang; and in a New Jersey warehouse, where they are holding a priest, a doctor, a guard's daughter, a reporter and a guard as hostages, they battle it out with the police. Tensely directed by Hugo Fregonese, and expertly acted by a large cast that includes Jean Parker and Milburn Stone, "Black Tuesday" is actually a thrilling exercise in ruthless brutality. You may wonder what all this good film-making adds up to, but if excitement is its only purpose, it certainly rings the bell.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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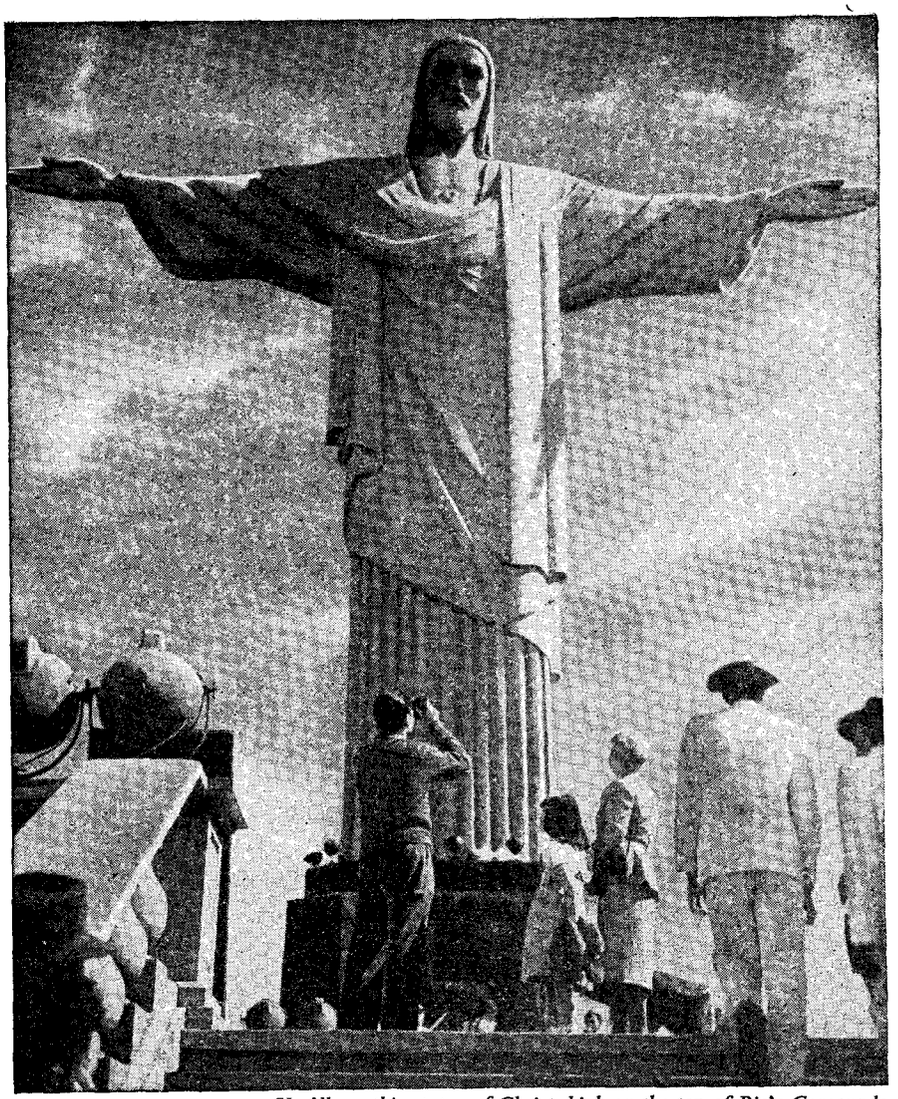

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Reality, Art, and Prayer

THOMAS MERTON

ONE of the most important—and most neglected—elements in the beginnings of the interior life is the ability to respond to reality, to see the value and the beauty in ordinary things, to come alive to the splendor that is all around us in the creatures of God. We do not see these things because we have withdrawn from them. In a way we have to. In modern life our senses are so constantly bombarded with stimulation from every side that unless we developed a kind of protective insensibility we would go crazy trying to respond to *all* the advertisements at the same time!

The first step in the interior life, nowadays, is not, as some might imagine, learning *not* to see and taste and hear and feel things. On the contrary, what we must do is begin by unlearning our wrong ways of seeing, tasting, feeling, and so forth, and acquire a few of the right ones.

For asceticism is not merely a matter of renouncing television, cigarettes, and gin. Before we can begin to be ascetics, we first have to learn to see life as if it were something more than a hypnotizing telecast. And we must be able to taste something besides tobacco and alcohol: we must perhaps even be able to taste these luxuries themselves as if they too were good.

How can our conscience tell us whether or not we are renouncing things unless it first of all tells us that we know how to use them properly? For renunciation is not an end in itself: it helps us to use things better. It helps us to give them away. If reality revolts us, if we merely turn away from it in disgust, to whom shall we sacrifice it? How shall we consecrate it? How shall we make of it a gift to God and to men?

In an aesthetic experience, in the creation or the contemplation of a work of art, the psychological conscience is able to attain some of its highest and most perfect fulfillments. Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time. The mind that responds to the intellectual and spiritual values that lie hidden in a poem, a painting, or a piece of music, discovers a spiritual vitality that lifts it above itself, takes it out of itself, and makes it present to itself on a level of being that it did not know it could ever achieve.

THE soul that picks and pries at itself in the isolation of its own dull self-analysis arrives at a self-consciousness that is a torment and a disfigurement of our whole personality. But the spirit that finds itself above itself in the intensity and cleanness of its reaction to a work of art is "self-conscious" in a way that is productive as well as sublime. Such a one finds in himself totally new capacities for thought and vision and moral action. Without a moment of self-analysis he has discovered himself in discovering his capacity to respond to a value that lifts him above his normal level. His very response makes him better and different. He is conscious of a new life and new powers, and it is not strange that he should proceed to develop them.

It is important, in the life of prayer, to be able to respond to such flashes of aesthetic intuition. Art and prayer have never been conceived by the Church as enemies, and where the Church has been austere it has only been because she meant to insist on the essential difference between art and entertainment. The austerity, gravity, sobriety, and strength of Gregorian chant, of twelfth-century Cistercian architecture, of Carolingian minuscule script, have much to say about the life of prayer, and they have had much to do, in the past, with forming the prayer and the religious consciousness of saints. They have always done so in proportion as they have freed souls from concentration upon themselves, as well as from mere speculation about technical values in the arts and in asceticism. One can be at the same time a technical expert in chant and a man of prayer, but the moments of prayer and of technical criticism do not usually coincide.

If the Church has emphasized the function of art in her public prayer, it has been because she knew that a true and valid aesthetic formation was necessary for the wholeness of Christian living and worship. The liturgy and the chant and Church art are all supposed to form and spiritualize man's consciousness, to give him a tone and a maturity without which his prayer cannot normally be either very deep or very wide or very pure.

There is only one reason why this is completely true: art is not an end in itself. It introduces the soul into a higher spiritual order, which it expresses and in some sense explains. Music and art and poetry attune the soul to God because they induce a kind of contract with the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. The genius of the artist finds its way by the affinity of crea-

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This is an excerpt from Father Merton's *No Man Is an Island*, published this week by Harcourt, Brace.

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tive sympathy, or conaturality, into the living law that rules the universe. This law is nothing but the secret gravitation that draws all things to God as to their center. Since all true art lays bare the action of this same law in the depths of our own nature, it makes us alive to the tremendous mystery of being, in which we ourselves, together with all other living and existing things, come forth from the depths of God and return again to Him. An art that does not produce something of this is not worthy of its name.

PETER AND JOHN RUNNING

FIRST is the woman, almost falling, panting
Out the news of the ponderous door standing
Ajar. And then the dreamy Sabbath of grief
That they have drowsed in, splinters into life.
Why have they stayed together near the scene?
The play was over Friday, the audience gone.
In this cruel moment of waking to premonition

Begins the strangest race that was ever run.
For both are victors before their legs begin
And running for life they run straight toward the dead.
He who is named beloved flies with the speed
Of innocence and wins because the feet
Of the other one are bruised with fatigue of guilt.
Yet now you see the loved one hesitate

At the deadly door. Winning more future than he
Can cope with he has to throw his laurel away.
Shy and delicate as a maid while he stoops
Hoping to see and not see, the other leaps
With all the crude weight of his need into the tomb
And so wins all he lost. Where he the lame
Has blundered a passage, though, the fleet can come

As well. He enters and stands, simply watching
With the wide soft eyes of a child the other snatching
Among the linens and the napkin as if
He searched for what he'd buried, behind a thief
Whose theft enriched. For here are both their graves:
If no dear flesh is found, they find their lives.
Before there is belief, the loved believes.

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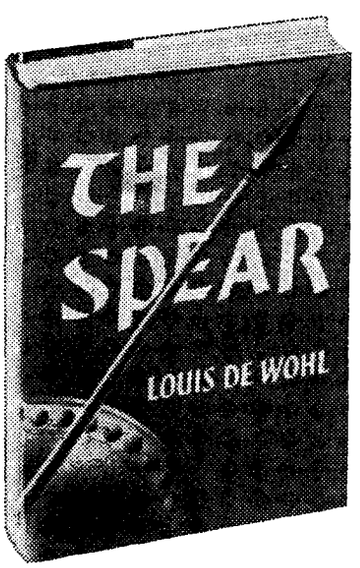

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Yeats' Lifelong Immersion in the Spirit of Ireland

THE LETTERS OF W. B. YEATS. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Allan Wade. Macmillan. $9.50.

By VIVIAN MERCIER

WHEN Yeats won the Nobel Prize in 1923 he remarked in a letter to Edmund Gosse: "I am grateful too because I have a better chance of being listened to here in Dublin than ever before." What humility—from a man reputed to be arrogant. We need no stronger proof of his being, as he always insisted, an Irish writer who wrote first of all for Ireland. He makes the same point a thousand ways in his letters. In 1908—the year after the "Playboy" riots—he stated: "I shall write for my own people—whether in love or hate of them matters little—probably I shall not know which it is."

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To read straight through these 850 pages of letters, written over a period of more than fifty years, is to realize that Ireland did at least as much for Yeats as he did for Ireland. His was no "opposing Self," but one that sought ever-greater unity with the culture around it. If the cities and the middle class of Ireland were against him, as they usually were, he could always console himself with the belief that the peasantry and the countryside were on his side at heart. At worst, he could always ally himself with Ireland of the past or with Ireland of the future. In 1887 he was already reminding Katherine Tynan of something that his whole life was dedicated to proving true: ". . . remember, by being Irish as you can, you will be more original and true to yourself and in the long run more interesting, even to English readers."

All Yeats' preoccupation with what he called Magic—mediumism, clairvoyance, automatic writing, the symbols of the Kabbala and Rosicrucianism, theosophy, astrology, telepathy, visions of ghosts and fairies—had the same end in view as his nationalism: to relate his Self and his poetry to a tradition that would enrich both. If you ask why he did not accomplish the same thing by becoming a Catholic, the answer seems to be that loyalty to yet another tradition, that of his Protestant ancestry, held him back. Even in his occultism he exercises private judgment. He always hopes that the spirit messages come from outside the Self—from Plato's *anima mundi* or Jung's collective unconscious—but he can also rationalize: "These messages at the worst are messages from one's deeper self."

That he was at heart so little of a rebel can be credited to his home environment. His father, though a powerful personality, never forced him into a mold. John Butler Yeats' gentlemanly bohemianism produced a son "who belongs to the orderly world," as W.B. remarks in a letter to Lady Gregory while relating some activities of Bohemia's lunatic fringe, doubtless the scions of grimly respectable lawyers or shopkeepers. Instead of wasting psychic energy in battles with father and family, Yeats toughened himself in battles for the autonomy of art. While fighting to insure that Abbey theater plays should be judged by artistic rather than theological or political standards, he still had tradition at his back; his play "The King's Threshold" reminds us that an Irish bard would defend his privileges against an Irish king by hunger strike, if necessary.

These letters seem to me far more important than Gide's overrated, narcissistic *Journal*. In them we can watch a personality that grows constantly—and always by seeking some fresh escape from mere subjectivity. Of the later letters we can say: "Who touches this book touches a man." Every word is alive, every sentence suffused with a personality which expresses itself while seeking to express something other than itself.

The gradual integration of Yeats' personality and the persistent yet ever-changing relationship between him and his national culture constitute the two lifelong themes of this epistolary autobiography. In 1932, while preparing his *Collected Poems*, he notes, in characteristically Irish imagery, the unity of all his work:

> My first denunciation of old age I made in *The Wanderings of Usheen* . . . before I was twenty and the same denunciation comes in the last pages of the book. The swordsman throughout repudiates the saint, but not without vacillation. Is that perhaps the sole theme—Usheen and Patrick . . .?

One or other of many secondary themes prevails at each period of his life. Whether they are looking for sidelights on the history of the Abbey Theater or a complete theory of heroic drama, lovers of the theater will find wonders here.

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Many letters to Florence Farr and others discuss how verse should best be spoken and sung. Much about the details of book publication and play production justifies Yeats' boast: "I have often failed as a poet but not yet as a businessman." Irish politics bulk very large at times, especially while Yeats is a senator or whenever politicians seek to hamper the arts. Occultism is frequently discussed throughout, of course, but Yeats' study of philosophy in later years—Whitehead, Plotinus, Berkeley, Croce, for example—may surprise many readers.

Being myself very much interested in the creation of a valid body of criticism to interpret and evaluate Anglo-Irish literature as a whole, I find Yeats' own criticism in the letters to be copious, trenchant (of course!), and extraordinarily well-informed. Seeking literary models for himself and others, he ferreted out in his early years every Anglo-Irish writer who possessed a grain of sincerity.

Finally, of course, one reads this correspondence for the same reasons as one always reads other people's letters: idle curiosity and desire for entertainment. Neither motive will be disappointed, for the letters are full of gossip, dry or satirical humor, and piquant insights into the everyday humanity of a great man.

When everybody concerned is dead, there will no doubt be a definitive edition of the letters; meanwhile, Mr. Wade's temporary edifice promises to stand for a generation at least.

American Prelate

CARDINAL O'CONNELL OF BOSTON. By Dorothy Wayman. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $4.

By JOE DEVER

IN this informal, engaging and perhaps overly sympathetic biography, Dorothy Wayman has taken large strides toward rectifying a certain injustice toward the late William Henry O'Connell, Cardinal Archbishop of Boston from

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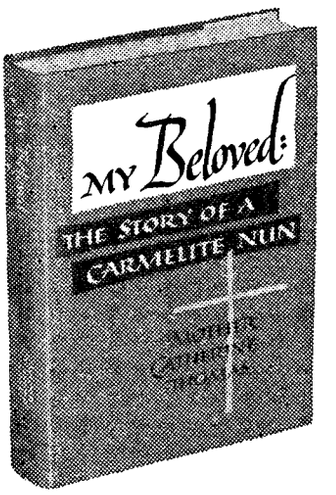

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1911 to 1944. In his lifetime there is no doubt that many American Catholics regarded him as a distant aristocrat, even a snob. Because of a recurrent bronchial condition, for example, it was necessary for the Cardinal to spend the worst part of the New England winter annually in Nassau. Annually, in the newsreels, there he was—waving at us from the gangplank. Perhaps the soubriquet "Gangplank Bill" by which, growing up, so many of us knew him would not have been as widespread if his flock had known of his ailment. Dorothy Wayman's book clears up points like this and leaves no doubt concerning the warm humanity, deep piety and intellectual breadth of the former Dean of the American hierarchy.

His life, of course, was rich and redolent with all the materials for a novel about an American Cardinal. And one comes to the conclusion, after hearing the anecdotes about him—both in and out of the biography—that the fictional form might tell his story best. Yet it can be seriously suggested that a truly realistic novel about the life of an American bishop or cardinal might not be too popular with Catholics, at least if it were to portray a graphline of heartache instead of grandeur. And heartache, perhaps even failure as the world knows it, has been and is the lot of more than one worthy American bishop.

Although Cardinal O'Connell was certainly not without his heartaches and perhaps not without his failures, his intellectual brilliance, ironclad prudence and social conservatism carried and maintained him high in the councils and esteem of the Vatican. "No individual priest," he once said, "has the right to speak for the whole Church. He has absolutely no right to commit the Church to any particular philosophy of economics. His mission is to preach the word of God and not arouse animosities and feelings of partisanship."

Twice Cardinal O'Connell was deprived of the opportunity to participate in the election of a pope because of traveling delays; twice he knew the sting of being unable to consider a ballot for his beloved

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Spanish confrere, Cardinal Merry del Val. He was, understandably, indignant, and if he was a conservative in the social order he certainly was not one when the occasion demanded action on the individual plane. And when he made his protest, Pius XI thought enough of his indignation to extend the period between a papal death and a papal election so that Cardinals in distant lands could in the future participate in the balloting for a new pope.

Perhaps O'Connell will be remembered in Church history best as a brilliant, wise and prudent administrator who, through an enormous, solvent, building and educational program, adjusted the vast Archdiocese of Boston to the needs of the faithful in an industrial and mechanical era. This reviewer, however, will remember him best—by Dorothy Wayman's leave—as one of the speakers at the Boston College Commencement in 1942. He was then eighty-three years old, with cataract trouble, yet possessed of a cane-thumping vigor and voice which was truly Olympian.

The exercises were held in the football stadium and the morning sun became increasingly torrid. The Cardinal, as was almost traditional, outshone the featured speaker of the day with an address that began most informally and rose to the magnificent crescendo of a great oration. Using an "I'm an old man . . ." theme with crushing compassion, he sent us off to war. He gave us a most profound and moving blessing and then was slowly escorted to his throne.

Later, the president of the college made some rather extensive remarks which in the sweltering June heat prompted the ancient Cardinal to say—for the edification of those in the front rows: "Naughty-naughty, Father Rector — talks too long. . . ."

REVIEWERS

Vivian Mercier, a member of the faculty at the City College of New York, is the co-editor of *1,000 Years of Irish Prose.*

Joe Dever is a novelist and short-story writer who lives in Boston.

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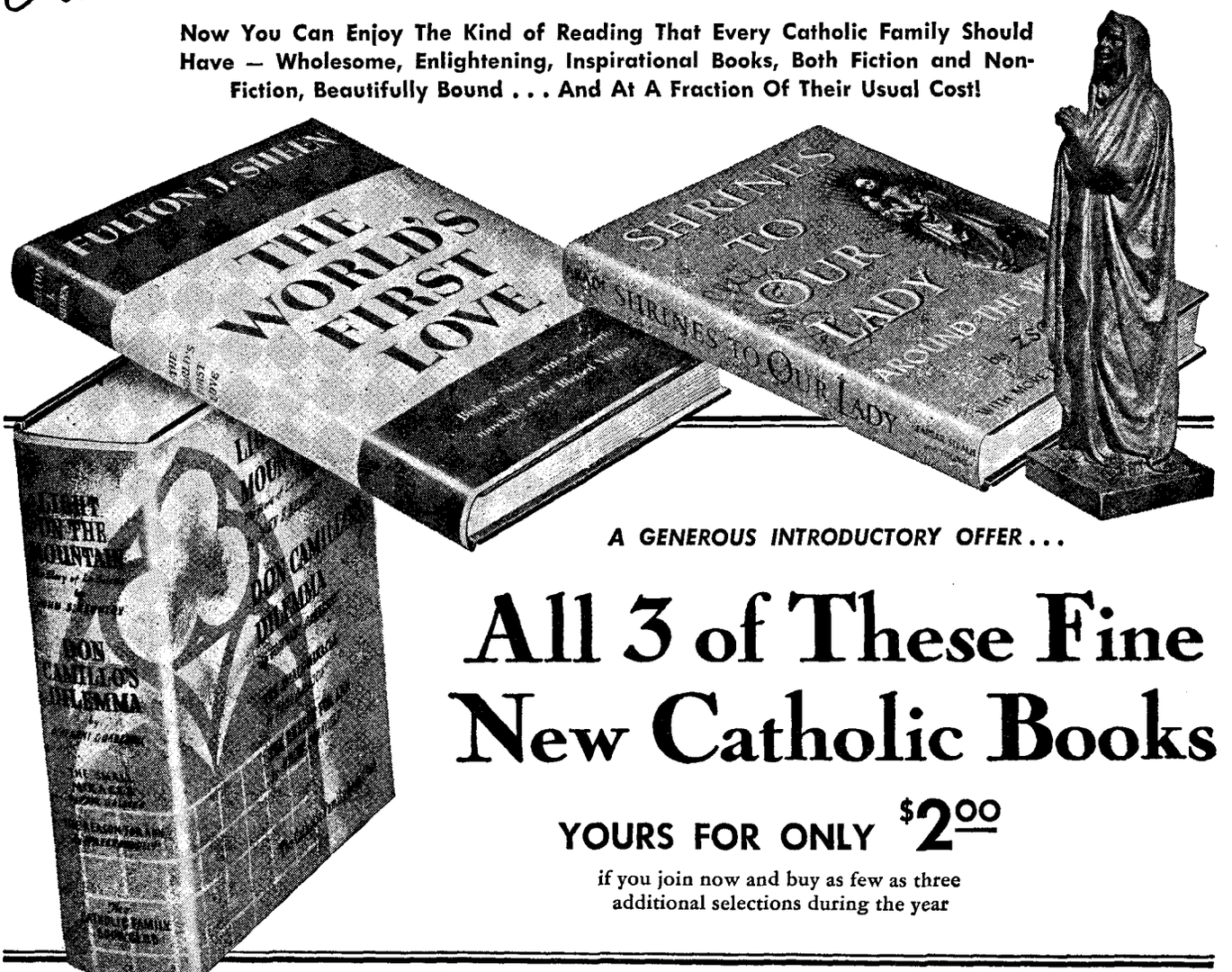

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